

THE HISTORY OF POCAHONTAS COUNTY
COUNTY

Chapter XI

CULTURAL AND SOCIAL ADVANCEMENT

(Chapter Outline)

Culture may be defined as the state of taste, refinement, and morals at any given moment; or, it may be used broadly to refer to improvement in these matters. We use it in the first sense and wish to show that its advancement came as conditions in the lives of the people changed or were changed. Refinement is not found in any large measure among primitive people. The pioneers of necessity were primitive in many ways. It is not idle to suppose, therefore, that culture in the early years was vestigial compared to the present standards. Many things contribute to the cultural state of any society; music, arts, recreation, the amount of leisure time available, the necessity of earning, the total necessary work to be done, the political set-up, the religious organization of the community, and others. In the present chapter, we wish to show how these factors worked to compose the status of culture at different points in its progress toward the present.

1. Pre-community life in its social aspect.
 - a. Social life in the home; a family form of society.
 - b. The church as a social institution.
 - c. Festivals, games, occasions when pioneers gathered.
2. Beginnings of Community Life.
 - a. The first group settlements in their social aspect.
 1. Things binding people to one social standard.
 2. Forms of social intercourse; parties, meetings, sports.
 3. Organized social life; lodges; clubs; art appreciation.
 - b. Influence of schools on social life.
 1. The teachers: Were they culturally superior to community residents?
 2. The pupils: Did they demand a better way of life?
3. The Narrative of Progress.
 - a. The gradual growth of cultural understanding.
 1. Music, art, literature.
 2. Education.
 3. Public institutions.

- b. How growth was determined or affected by social upsets; e.g.,
War between the States.
 - 1. How strong currents of feeling influenced the status of society at different points.
 - 2. The crises: points of definite change.
 - 3. Contributing influences to raised standard.
- c. The awakening to the wide world.
 - 1. Influences from outside. The coming of railroads, highways, regular postal service, books, newspapers (from outside).
 - 2. Currents of national scope affecting the county.
 - 3. Establishment of newspapers, libraries, schools, recreation centers, clubs.
 - 4. Progress toward becoming a part of a larger social set-up. Gradual assimilation of county peculiarities into larger pictures of state and nation. Differences that remain.
- 4. The Status Quo: Present Panorama.
 - a. Recent changes in outlook and situation.
 - 1. Growth of public welfare agencies.
 - 2. Spread of public work programs.
 - 3. Increasing of social consciousness.
 - b. The church of today as a social establishment.
 - 1. Waxing or waning of use along this line; opinion of local leaders as to its position in the matter.
 - 2. Services performed by churches other than religious.
 - c. The educational institutions' social activities.
 - 1. How they increase use of cultural instruments.
 - 2. How they foster progressive action in community affairs.
 - 3. How they are adapted to adult education and interest.
 - d. Art, literature, music, in the community. (Treatment may be as broad as local conditions in the fields permit.)

- e. The theatre and the movies. Influence on life, habits, desires.
(Separate treatment for movies and theatre.)
- f. Recreational facilities and program. (Complete and detailed handling of all that is available, is possible, is done in this field.)
- g. Newspapers and journals - complete present picture.
- h. Sports - organized for group participation, separate from schools.
- i. Public health - state agencies - public officers.
- j. Program of public interest that increase community beauty and happiness. New public institutions, buildings, art galleries, recreation halls, swimming pools, conservation programs for forests and wildlife. (Anything paid for by taxes.)
- k. Private institutions that encourage refinement and personal and community improvement.

CHAPTER FIVE -- EARLY LIFE AND OCCUPATION (Pocahontas County)

The frontier dweller who settled west of the Alleghenies was an extraordinary fellow in many respects. His predecessors, the hunters, trappers, and Indian traders, came into the wilderness for one or both of two reasons; the gratification of a desire for adventure, or in the belief that quick riches could be had by daring the perils of the Indian country. The frontiersman who brought along his family and settled permanently, however, had other reasons for leaving behind the security of life in the seaboard settlements for the hazardous existence of the mountain country. His motives can be established by uncovering any writings left behind, such as journals, diaries or observation quoted in later publications. These motives should tell us exactly what type of people first settled in the county, not only who they were, but where they came from, and why they came and how. If an American of today were to take his family and attempt to carve an existence out of the Amazon jungles, leaving behind the security of life in New York or Chicago, he would certainly have very impelling motives. The motives had to be equally impelling to attract families to the wilderness from settlements in New England, or Maryland, or Tidewater, Virginia. The frontier settlers evidently envisioned, a free and profitable life for himself and his family, and a fine opportunity for his children.

This chapter should not infringe on the preceding chapter on the people, but should be written from the angle of Occupation. The frontiersman lead a life devoted to "Dawn-to-dusk" labor to keep his existence intact, and everything in his life pointed toward productive effort. So, in the first sections of the chapter it will be imperative that definite references be given in all sections, references as to names, dates, and places, with all additional authenticated material available. In an intensive work on a section as small as a county, the writer cannot include too many names and recognizable place references; the latter serve to place firmly the locale for the reader.

The pioneer's economic life can be exhaustively studied thus:

1. His Home.
 - a. Its physical aspects as to size, construction, convenience, limitations; the description of the frontier woman's performances, of chores, and of the tasks peculiar to frontier life; the added burdens as differentiated from town life; the special skills developed through necessity at home; preparation for dealing with emergencies, illness, childbirth, death.
 - b. Its Atmosphere. Did daily contact with danger coarsen the frontiersman? What kind of a man was he, as shown by the outstanding men whose deeds have been recorded or passed along by word of mouth? Did he have a large family, and how did he rear his children? What duties did they? How early were they self-reliant and in what respects? What practical knowledge were they taught, and what little academics? What fund did this life hold; what songs were sung; what stories told, what heroes, praised, what villains hated; in short, what self-entertainment did these isolated homesteads offer?